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THE CEA CRITIC

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Report of the Committee of the Whole - Madison, Wisconsin, Sept. 18, 1957

(Extracts from the report presented by Henry Sams, first vice-president. at the annual CEA banquet)

My job is to inform you of what the officers and committees of CEA have been thinking about and doing during the past year. I can do this with some degree of accuracy because of two things: first, the meetings in Amherst during the last three years, and second, a series of letters I have received from the chairmen of committees now active in the CEA. My remarks will be a summary, in my own words, of these letters and of discussions last June in the Executive Committee. I hope I shan't distort them.

Essential Qualifications and Recruitment—Kenneth Knickerbocker. Our real problem is attracting warm, live bodies into teaching. Some few talented souls will be compelled by their talents to join us. This is fine, but it is not enough. The talents capable of serving us best are useful in many fields of action. Departments should plan systematically to make teaching an appealing item in the student's vocational problem.

The prerequisite is to "run," as Kenneth puts it, "a stimulating establishment," both in the office and at home. And then we must bring the student into it, welcome him, and pay him the civil compliment of attention. We must listen to him, understand him, and criticize him with all the finesse and circumspection that we use in appraisal of a poem or a play.

Re-assessing and Re-direction of the MA and PhD Programs—Don Lloyd, William Werner, Al Ryan. The fact is that our PhD programs are generally the best that we can do in humane education in this country at this time. It does not follow, however, that our best is good enough. The best wisdom, and **all** the wisdom, of educated men throughout the country should be focussed to make it better if and when we can.

To this end the report of this committee has been designated as the subject for continuing debate in **The Critic** for the coming year. A forum has been set up for us there. Use it. Follow the argument from issue to issue. Examine its points with your colleagues at home. Write your thoughts on the matter.

The report we now have is a good one. A year's critical reflection by all of us can make it better.

Profesional Standards and Conditions—Carl LeFevre and Donald Sears. The professional conduct of the English teacher, the intellectual climate in which he lives, and to which he contributes, his relations with the administrative officers of his institution, his salary, rank, and tenure, his office, his access to stenographic help, his role in his department, his scholarly and professional growth—all these things are influenced by policies and rules largely controlled by the managerial officials with whom he works.

When things are going well, these officials are friends. When things are going badly, they are the enemy.

We are living in the years of organized, team research . . . History denies the concept of humanistic knowledge as an accumulation superior to the individual mind. Humanistic learning is private, singular. It appears intact and whole in the character, activity, and intonation of an individual human being. I wish, therefore, that the doctoral dissertation might sometimes be described as an essay which demonstrates that the student is a man to whom knowledge had contributed something.

But here I am overstating the matter. Actually, we are characteristically too private in our professional activities. We should deliberately work together oftener than we do. We can work together in the vital undertaking of teaching our students well. Private possession of periods, fields, seminars, and particular students has some advantages. So has the feudal tenure of land. And so has land reform.

The Qualitative—Quantitative Crux—Ernest Earnest and Bruce Dearing. Our job will be bigger in the coming years. We must discharge it without falling into the routine, mechanical dullness that comes of exhaustion.

Two ways present themselves as possible

(Please turn to p. 5)

Doctoral Studies in English

I have read with interest the Report of the CEA Committee on Doctoral Studies in English and welcome the opportunity to make a few comments upon it. The Committee has obviously given much thoughtful attention to the problem of the Ph.D. I am sure that its recommendations will be the basis for much stimulating discussion of problems which concern us all.

To begin with the observations of the sub-committee on linguistic studies, I can report my own general agreement with the views expressed. It is probably not necessary to descant, at this moment in our academic history, on such "present evils" as "the archaic pursuit of correctness and the grim concentration on certain points of usage" etc., but one can pass over these cliches and assent to the specific proposals contained in Professor Lloyd's final paragraph—with the wish, though not the expectation, that the program outlined can be condensed into two full-year courses. The area in which, at present, results are of more questionable value is (3), Linguistics and Literature, but important work is being done here, and graduate students should certainly be made aware of its objectives and methods.

Some Confusion

In the main part of "Doctoral Studies in English and Preparation for Teaching" I find some of the confusion of doctrine which the title suggests. The authors seem to be aware that at least three-quarters of the work of college teachers of English is, and will continue to be, in elementary courses in composition and literature: and that a substantial fraction of the undergraduates majoring in the subject have a professional interest in qualifying for secondary school posts.

But these facts appear not to have been squarely faced in the discussion of 'preparation for teaching' and as a result, I think, the parts of the Committee's proposals which relate to this important subject are incomplete and indecisive, though they contain useful hints and suggestions.

(Please turn to p. 6)

THE CEA CRITIC

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The Tennessee CEA and the University of Tennessee are co-sponsors of a booklet setting forth standards in English expected of students who enter college. Professor Charles Webb will be general editor.

Garrett Ballard of North Texas State College reports as an interesting sequel to his article in the Sept. CEA Critic on "Increasing Advanced Enrollment in English" that this fall the advanced English enrollment at North Texas increased another 15 percent, while the general college enrollment remained unchanged.

Bob Fitzhugh is a Smith-Mundt lecturer in American Literature this year at Shiraz, Iran. He reports that he is having a very agreeable and busy life there.

WHICH GENERATION?

In one of its most valuable issues of recent times, the **Nation** on March 9 published a symposium on the literary interests of the present generation of college students, under the significant title "The Careful Young Men."

The **Nation** in its covering editorial whistles to keep up its courage, tries manfully to like the picture of youth which it obviously does not like, but it can't help applying such damning epithets as "these company men . . . lacking in gaiety and a sense of life . . . Conservative . . . Conforming." These have never been terms by which American intellectuals express enthusiastic admiration. But is it the younger generation that is really guilty?

The individual articles in the symposium, by professors of literature and creative writing, widely distributed geographically, do show a remarkable agreement. They give us a composite picture worthy of their comments, such as, "Chamber of Commerce morality is flourishing as never before," and "In twenty years they will run the most powerful nation on earth. For this they will have been trained but not educated; they will have inherited our native Puritanism; they will have the manners taught in their Life Adjustments class and modified by the members of their corporate group; they will work hard and have large families. They will be earnest but dull." (Comment by Allan Seager, U. of Michigan.)

Teachers Are to Blame

But surely these reports reveal the attitudes that have been fostered by the professors' own generation. And the damage so convincingly reported has not been chiefly the work of parents, politicians, businessmen, generals, or television showmen; have intellectuals ever let themselves be led by the nose by the bourgeoisie or by the brass?

But they do let themselves be influenced by the previous generation of teachers. The most efficient destruction has been the work of a demolition squad of English professors, a small but aggressive minority within their own departments, hard at work with the efficiency of doctrinaires.

And the teamwork! They have practically monopolized control of the journals of literary criticism published at the expense of academic endowments or state taxes. It is the past twenty years that should have made us shudder. Close to this movement, I have shuddered at it, in public, for a long time now, and if it were any consolation I could say, "I told you so," to these professors of creative writing.

Why is it that our young intellectuals find no message in literature and therefore as a literary generation have no message at all to give to the public? Who killed the idea that in poetry and dramatic fiction one may study how to achieve the good life? Who taught us to handle a poem like a cross-word puzzle, and to look upon a Shakespearean play as a mere hunting-ground through which to pursue an elusive metaphor? It has been said that the murder of the Classical languages was an inside job, the work of pedantry among Latin professors. Who killed "English"? Not students but professors "lacking in gaiety and a sense of life."

Teacher of Life

Up until our generation, the great teacher of life, the **magister vitae**, has always been literature, from the days when the Greeks read Homer that way — and not excluding those periods when the literate have spent their most serious efforts of interpretation on one body of literature, the Bible. The Classical assumption, that literature is our guide, was not repudiated but rather strengthened by the Romantic movement, with its identification of the poet as prophet and the prose artist as sage. This tradition is still a force in Europe, where poets start revolts, novelists win elections, and "The English observe the battle of The New Critics with considerable equanimity: they rather prefer the 'humane' critics—More to Matthiessen to Trilling and Wilson . . ." This I quote from the same issue of the **Nation**, a review by Robert Hatch of Angoff's **American Writing Today.** Great literature has never been written mainly to provide school-exercizes for New Critics lacking in gaiety and a sense of life. It was written to be read by men and women in the thick of life, and it increased their delight not merely in the art of **belles lettres** but in life itself.

This great tradition, still alive in some of our social realism, was challenged by various Aesthetic and Formalist movements, for more than a century. But perhaps at first even Aestheticism was often a disguised moralism, a transvaluation of values among the Bohemian circles of Paris, London, and Greenwich Village. This cannot be said of the Aestheticism drained of all

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passion and the fire of protest, as it has been taught by the new Critics to a whole academic generation of aspiring writers.

Certain contributors to the **Nation** symposium touch upon this development, but they do not follow through: Leo Marx (Minnesota) says, "They like the New Critics, who, following Eliot and Richards, have made an elaborate ritual out of criticism." Charles Fenton (Yale) says, "The persuasive fluency of contemporary literary scholarship and instruction has bred a generation of undergraduate critics more concerned—like their instructors—with form than with statement." John Willingham (Centenary, Shreveport) refers to the acceptance of "the canons of neo-orthodoxy, the New Criticism," and George Stewart (California) smiles at the term "New" as a label for these critics "of the older generation."

Alan Swallow (Denver) correctly specifies: "that one of the truly revolutionary books of our times is **Understanding Poetry** by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. It has a host of imitators . . . it has changed the teaching of literature in our colleges." But he thinks this influence "has been mostly to the good"! Only Karl Shapiro (Nebraska) says bluntly of **Understanding Poetry**, "It is the book that took poetry off the streets and put it in the laboratory. It has not only revolutionized the teaching of literature; it has practically put a stop to genius . . . the brainless and beautiful poetry of our leading verse magazines derives from **Understanding Poetry.**"

But this is countered by Richard Chase (Columbia) who declares that "To speak, as many people do, of a whole generation ruined by the New Critics makes little sense."

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Professors to Blame

But the important point has not yet been made, namely, that this is not a normal case of a younger generation developing its own new literary interests. Youth did not **discover** this Formalism and Aestheticism, as it once discovered Mencken and Sinclair Lewis. **Understanding Poetry** was assigned to these students. It was selected by professors of the generation that now throws up its hands in horror at the result. We must be very clear about that.

Why have the teachers of creative writing been so susceptible to this century-old "New" formalism? The answer is found in Plato's **Phaedrus,** which protests against the isolation of the skill of verbal communication as if it were something that might be taught as a mere technique. The writer or speaker must use art, yes indeed. But mainly, says Socrates, the greatness of his success will depend on his knowledge of (a) his subject matter, and (b) the psychology of his audience. Now insofar as a class in creative writing supplies an audience, it is made up of other writers. There one is taught to do what the little magazines encourage: to write for those who want to write. And what is the subject matter of such a course of study? Again, it is likely to be problems of technique.

I am not saying that university work in creative writing must necessarily be formalistic, but that it has tended to be pulled in that direction. I have long urged one cure, that in the Middle West, for example, the aspiring writers should be urged to look at their own region and try to deepen our understanding of a land much maligned in the twenties. Or the subject matter of the writer can be something he has to say, some insight into values and human potentialities. In that case he should be **studying,** say, concepts of justice, or happiness, not just the devices and forms of literary artefacts twenty or thirty years old. But year after year bright and sensitive young men have been taught—by their elders—to turn away from such social anthropology, or moral evaluation, or economics, for these interests are not "literature as such." We are not to use art for any human purpose; it must be art for art's sake! No wonder the result has been cultural sterility.

Exclusiveness to Blame

This damage to our culture has been done by certain specific things, by **Understanding Poetry,** by the **Kenyon Review** and its host of imitators, by the implication that literature is mainly to be written, and even read, in ivory towers. The harm does not lie in what these formalists do, positively; for the aesthetic aspect of literature is indeed worthy of attention. The harm lies in their exclusiveness, and in their power to kill off other types of approach.

And what if a young writer did find that he had something to say, vitally, not about "myth and metaphor" or "texture and structure," but about human problems, about life, about ideals and eternal verities? How far would he get—in the classroom? And almost all literate Americans of college age are in college now. How far would he get in the "little magazines" and the journals monopolized by the New Critic's trust? In short, what would the older generation do to him? And in their function as educators of the general public, what have they done to provide him with the right kind of audience?

Surely we are not to assume that the literary educators produce no results at all. And by their fruits ye shall know them. Where **Understanding Poetry** is assigned as a textbook, where the literary students themselves are "trained but not educated," —who dunnit? Which generation delivered the cadavres to the dissecting rooms? Who is responsible for reiterating, in periodicals and in classrooms, the plausible falsehood that there is no essential relationship between literature and life?

Joseph E. Baker
University of Iowa

The NEA reports that fewer and fewer new Ph.D.'s are going into teaching. Although the production of Ph.D.'s is four times greater than it was ten years ago, only 23.5 per cent of new college teachers hold the degree. Four years ago, 31.4 per cent held it. Also, the number of full-time college teachers without the M.A. degree is increasing; four years ago 18 per cent of college teachers were in this category, but now 23 per cent do not have even the M.A.

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IF A SHOE FITS . . .

Telling evidence to support the work of CEA's General Composition Standards Committee is provided by the results of a testing program in writing proficiency administered for several years to juniors in Mississippi colleges. The committee's proposal that a composition test be made a part of the entrance examination for college freshmen is greatly strengthened by this evidence.

Justly concerned by the charges leveled by other disciplines during the course of the academic program and by a variety of employers of college graduates, one state institution began eight years ago a program of testing on the junior level.

The test—a composition of five to seven hundred words—was required of all students with junior, or third year, standing, including both students who had completed the normal freshman composition course at the institution and transfer students. Students wrote under supervised conditions on a topic chosen from a carefully planned but extensive list of subjects.

Twenty Percent Deficient

The results of the composition test showed clearly that at least one in five of the juniors was deficient in the minimum essentials of acceptable writing, certainly below any standard which could be labeled "proficient." In an effort to remedy the situation, the institution set up a new course to be required of all students failing the examination; now a student must pass the course, even though he repeats it several times, in order to obtain a degree. In short, proficiency in writing has been made a degree requirement.

Other institutions in Mississippi soon realized the seriousness of the problem and set up comparable programs. The state English Commission, an advisory group to the Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities, studied the matter and shortly recommended that all state institutions establish a similar method of testing junior level students and provide a process, such as a course or laboratory, for removing writing deficiencies.

At the present time all state-supported institutions but one and several of the private colleges have followed the recommendation. In general, then, the institutions of Mississippi have found that passing the standard course in freshman composition is no guarantee of continued writing proficiency.

Test Results

Proof positive of the failure of some conventional methods used in freshman courses—and provoking many questions concerning the retention of secondary school training, especially with reference to students who merely pass—is evident when an inspection is made of the test results of more than 6000 college juniors.

These results may be divided into four groups in terms of training in English prior to testing: Mississippi junior colleges, other junior colleges, Mississippi senior colleges (including the testing institution itself), and other colleges and universities. For Mississippi junior colleges, the per cent of failures ranges from zero to forty-one, with an average failure rate of thirty-two per cent.

Students trained in state four-year colleges show a failure rate of from zero to twenty-three per cent, the average being 13 per cent. The average rate for other colleges and universities is sixteen per cent.

Institutions showing a perfect score were not the source of enough students to be significant statistically, nor is the present paper concerned with a detailed analysis of the data. It was apparent that junior college training was less productive of proficient writers than senior college training, and that out-of-state senior colleges fared a trifle less well than Mississippi colleges.

In addition, the point should be made that out-of-state junior colleges contributed but three per cent of the total number of junior college transfers tested. The testing institution was somewhat relieved to find that students prepared in its own composition courses fall in the same bracket with the average for the group, thirteen per cent failures; but, since the institution has been doing large scale remedial work on the freshman level, even this figure is felt to be too high.

Remedial Writing?

Several conclusions are possible in support of the stand of the General Composition Committee that the problem of proficient writing is acute. There is a growing conviction that remedial work on any level is questionable as a justifiable part of the job that colleges and universities are supposed to do. Remedial work on the junior level is, of course, even less desirable than such training on the freshman level. Certainly it should be expected that a student will attain a degree of proficiency as a freshman that he will be able to retain not only throughout college but beyond.

Yet much has been written and said about the inadequate preparation in writing with which too many students approach college; one result has been non-credit courses or laboratory work on the sub-freshman level. The quality and extent, particularly in writing, of secondary school language training is held suspect. And it is at this point that an uncomfortable question arises: Where are the secondary school teachers trained? They are trained in the colleges, of course. What do they teach? They teach what they were taught to teach. It is now a fairly open secret that most English teachers have been ill prepared to cope with the teaching of the English language. Better training for potential teachers is part of the solution, but, unfortunately, as a long-range plan it does not affect the immediate presence of glaring deficiencies.

Stricter Standards

The sort of careful composition testing now being studied by the General Composition Committee is one of the ways that deficiencies may be detected as the student enters college, rather than at some intermediate point thereafter. Stricter standards for freshman composition courses, with major stress upon effective writing, are another way to assure the student of his proficiency at the time he completes the course, and will prevent penalizing him for poor proficiency at a later date. Nor can English departments bear the entire burden; other disciplines must cooperate in demanding as a matter of routine the kind of writing which they are so quick to blame English departments for not "teaching" to students.

The existing committee does not propose to solve all the problems nor to answer all the questions that may—or should—result from its present efforts. But the committee does not intend to let this sleeping dog lie, and the disturbing picture depicted by the Mississippi tests should suggest the need for cooperative scratching.

Patrick G. Hogan
Mississippi State College

The Indiana CEA's publication, **The Associator,** a neatly mimeographed 25-page magazine, began its second year with a full report of the spring meeting, many news notes, and detailed information about what English teachers in Indiana colleges are doing. Other CEA regionals might well follow the Indiana group in issuing informative publications for their membership.

The American embassy in London is sponsoring a series of lectures this fall on American writers, to be given in the Cultural Affairs Building, 41 Grosvenor Square. On Oct. 22 Carl Bode lectured on Thoreau. Other American lecturers in the series are Carlos Baker, Richard Lewis, Lewis Leary, and Walter Bezanson.

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

(Continued from p. 1)

lines for exploration. The first, Ernest's way, is to relieve drudgery of teaching by elaborating its organizational heirarchies. Give the experienced teacher the assistants and subordinates that every petty industrial official takes for granted. Give him a supervisory dimension.

The second way, Bruce's way, is to explore all the devices of the machine age and by using them selectively to alleviate the repetitive drudgery of teaching. Bruce is concerned lest we elevate the twenty-student section into a modern, unhallowed **opus Dei**, and in it lose **ourselves**. Closed circuit TV, films, recordings—none of them nostrums—may in particular situations and for particular purposes prove useful.

Essentially these two approaches are the same. Both propose that the experienced, effective teacher assume a larger sphere of influence in the life of his campus, and that he be given more expensive tools to work with. This is not intended to imply exploitation of the young instructor. On the contrary, it should bring the young instructor more fully into the work of the department as a whole.

The teaching of English is a profession, not a trade. We cannot maintain its dignity by assiduousness alone.

Continuing Education—Clyde Henson. I hope that we can work out ways to offer really useful cooperation to the deans and directors of extension divisions. The more I see of their operations, the more I am of the opinion that they have the toughest, most laborious, and most thankless job in the entire educational scene—and this despite the fact that every premise of conscience and common sense assures us that things should be otherwise.

International Responsibilities — Carl Bode. As a representative of the State Department, Carl Bode wants first rate people to represent this country abroad. He wants us to establish continuing associations with colleagues in England. I am trying to learn from him just how CEA should proceed in setting up such relationships with analogous organizations in England. We want British contributors to **The Critic.** We want correspondence and exchanges.

Most important, we want our able teachers to go abroad, not only because of what they can teach others, but because of the enrichment of their teaching here when they return.

Humanities Center Liaison Committee—Don Lloyd. One of the dangers of our profession is that of cultural isolation. It is comfortable, but unwise, to subject oneself to judgment only by criteria of one's devising. The Humanities Center, as now organized, an independent organization designed to make industry and the liberal arts better acquainted with one another, is no longer a creature of CEA. A number of CEA members retain active membership in Center committees. Max continues his energetic direction of both.

But the CEA, as such, is free to concentrate once more on its middle initial.

In summary: The meetings at Amherst and here, my talks with individual members, the letters that I received during the past summer have reinforced my confidence in the College English Association.

Sometimes, I know, it seems that we are offered too many meetings. Too many junkets here and there to say this and that. We are organized too much.

But in every age and in every society we men have to attend both to other men and to our souls. In all walks of life, as in the profession of the teacher, we must stand together, and we must stand alone—no man sufficient unto himself, and no man dependent upon or imitative of another.

Henry Sams
The University of Chicago

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THE QUESTION

And when I finished cultivating
And felt like Plato that had planted seeds,
The question came: "Professor, I have
been debating
Why all these men didn't live their creeds.
Why Shelley with eternal hope,
Inflicted death on his first flower.
Why Swift whose eye well saw the scope,
Ignored it, as he reached for power.
And Dryden, deadly, with relentless perspicuity
Exhumed Absalom and Achitophel,
Yet, methinks, really guarded his annuity."
He paused: "Sir, these men—are they in Heaven or in Hell?"
I stared, removed my glasses from their perch,
I coughed amid the toll of bell, and left him with the search.

Charles E. Jarvis
Lowell Technological Institute

The annual reading institute at Temple University will be held in Philadelphia Jan. 27-31, 1958. The theme will be "Reading in the Total School Program." For information write to The Reading Clinic, Temple University, Philadelphia 22, Pa.

DOCTORAL STUDIES

(Continued from p. 1)

As for the scholar-teachers (perhaps 10% of the students enrolled) who will be trained in our graduate schools, the present situation is now more favorable than the Committee allows. Certainly there is no lack of opportunity for profiting by those disciplines which are mentioned with approval—for interdepartmental studies, for the combination of a foreign literature with English, for "the aesthetic critical approach," for concentration upon criticism, or fiction, or drama instead of a historical field.

Much of the explicit or implied criticism of existing programs is simply out of date. The present danger is not that breadth or variety will be discouraged, but that it will be allowed at the expense of thoroughness and depth.

This tendency, indeed, is evident in the Committee's remarks on the importance of the acquisition of Greek (how much can be usefully accomplished in a year or two?) or of philosophy (to be mastered by lectures on "some of the greater philosophers, with reference to a work in which the students had done some reading during the week"). Of course the Ph.D. candidate should have many knowledges; but as every teacher of graduates knows, the practical problem is "How much can be thoroughly done in the three or four years which the average young man can devote to graduate studies?"

Too Elementary

As almost all critics agree, the American system is somehow defective in providing, at a relatively early stage, a satisfactory general education; and until this fault is corrected, too much attention must be given, in graduate years, to studies of a somewhat elementary kind. Whether requirements for candidacy for advanced degrees can be raised so that Ph.D. students can usefully devote themselves to higher studies of the kinds recommended (e.g., the historical or aesthetic criticism of foreign literature) is doubtful, though we may well seek improvements in this direction.

In my opinion it is more likely that the doctorate will become a "teachers' degree," and be modified to this end, while the severer training in scholarship will be reserved for the minority who can profit by it, and who will usually be rewarded for their achievement when they produce (as in France) theses worthy of recognition.

More Thought Needed

Meanwhile we shall probably continue to "broaden" graduate studies, and in particular to assimilate the behavioral sciences to our literary studies. What is urgently needed at this stage is a re-examination of the purposes which should control the reading, criticism, and teaching of English.

I regret that there is so little in the Report which suggests that the fundamental philosophy and objectives which should control our activities have been thought out. Can historical research be justified if history is thought to have lost its relevance and utility? Or can the "aesthetic approach" lead to anything more satisfying than an arcanum of mysteries?

Warner G. Rice
Univ. of Michigan

Needless to say, I am gratified both at the scope of your study and at the results obtained. Your committee should be congratulated.

I have noted personally over the years when I served as a college administrator, the great lack of interest in truly "teaching English." It has always seemed to me that the ultimate goal of a doctoral candidate in your field was a narrow special area of subject matter. This inevitably restricted the efforts of the professor to an area that prevented the proper instruction in the use of the English language.

Few professors indicate even a passing interest in the area of grammar, for example, and prefer to study, research and lecture within a minute portion of literature. This is unfortunate in my estimation and results in many poorly equipped college graduates in business affairs.

Your report stresses the value of certain concentrations. I am quite interested, personally, in your ideas upon concentrations on a cross-discipline basis. This might well improve the degree of interest in the area of English as a whole.

I am sorry that I cannot be too critical, but you must realize that I feel you are definitely on the right track in your investigation.

J. Whitney Bunting, Consultant
Educational and
Corporate Support Research
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Robert B. Heilman's The Magic Web: Action and Language in Othello won the $200 award offered by The Explicator for the best book of explication de texte published in 1956. The contest for books published in 1957 will be announced early in 1958.

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New England CEA Spring Meeting

Under the program chairmanship of Herbert Brown (Bowdoin) the New England CEA (Muriel J. Hughes, Univ. of Vermont, president) held its spring meeting on May 4 at Bowdoin College. The chief address was given by John W. Aldridge who spoke on "The American Writer and the Corporate Ethic." Pointing out that in recent years the American intellectual has lost most of his ideologies and platforms of dissent, the speaker said that in this country the creative artist has become increasingly vulnerable to the pressure to conform.

Conformity has large rewards to offer and it is becoming all there is as a platform for action. Exploiters of the institutions that have grown up around the creative arts in years gone by now prosper and have status, security, and power, but the institutions themselves have lost the ability to create. The intellectual in America today, he maintained, has adopted the hypocrisies of a mass culture. He sharply criticized the foundations for their failure to give real support to creative artists and decried the contemporary tendency of the academic and literary worlds to merge. The creative writer living within academic walls must learn to anesthetize himself against the temptations of the academic power complex.

A discussion of the humanities and freshman English was led by Fred B. Millett (Wesleyan). Ellsworth Barnard (Chicago) described the type of course in which the great books are used to supply the subject matter for composition. Freshman English, he felt, should be devoted primarily to introducing students to ideas. Robert Berkelman (Bates), Hilda M. Fife (Maine) and Richard L. Brown (Middlebury) all emphasized the value of the humanities type of course as an early step in training. The freshman readings should be really difficult, well above the high school level, and the emphasis in writing should be on the ideas, not on the mechanics.

A session on writing was chaired by Louis O. Coxe (Bowdoin) and speakers were Corroll Towle (Univ of N. H.) and John Gould (Lisbon Falls). Prof. Towle said that not much can be done to teach writing in the classroom only; conferences, social meeting, and personal contacts are needed. The teacher must be a combination coach, thinker, and practitioner. John Gould said that the best teachers under whom he had studied had given him the "feel" of language, had taught him discernment, and had suggested to him ideas about subjects adaptable for writing.

John E. Hankins (Maine) chaired a discussion of the teaching of Shakespeare. G. R. Elliott (Amherst) defended the intensive study of Shakespeare as the only way to get students excited about him. We teachers love Shakespeare; our problem is to find a way to persuade students to love him too. This can be done by leading them to understand and feel the tone of his plays. Kenneth Myrick (Tufts) praised the Kittredge approach of close analysis and emphasized the importance of presenting the dramatic realities of the plays. Our task, he said, is to help students achieve a reasonable approximation of the theater reaction of Shakespeare's day. In the discussion it was suggested that the best course is one which does a few plays intensively—one or two— and then does many plays—perhaps 20 or 22—rapidly. Plays like **Twelfth Night, Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello** best repay intensive study. Prof. Hankins emphasized the value of considering the enigmatic quality in Shakespeare, but Prof. Myrick questioned whether the emphasis on motivation and the enigmatic is a good thing.

Norman Pearson (Yale) chaired a discussion of American Literature in which Patrick Quinn (Wellesley), James Beard (Clark) and John Iorio (Colby) took part. Reports were that the session was very lively but because of a conflict with the Shakespeare session this reporter did not attend and so cannot say what transpired.

The formal program concluded with a challenging session on modern poetry—"The Place of Poetry Today." Curtis E. Dahl (Wheaton) was in the chair. Robert Wooster Stallman (Univ. of Conn.) said that before Eliot in poetry we had "wastelands of tenderness" but today our kinship is with Henry James—"art must be as hard as nails." He felt that most of the obscurity of modern poetry exists only in the discussions of it. Frost's good poems and the best of Ransom, Stevens, and some younger poets "begin in delight and end in wisdom," but they are not tender, they are hard as nails. But poets should not make systems. Poetry is not the place to solve problems. Two contemporary poets, Samuel French Morse (Trinity) and Louis Osborne Coxe (Bowdoin), were on the platform listening to Stallman's discussion, and when he was done they reinforced his remarks with their own first-hand evaluations.

L. E. H.

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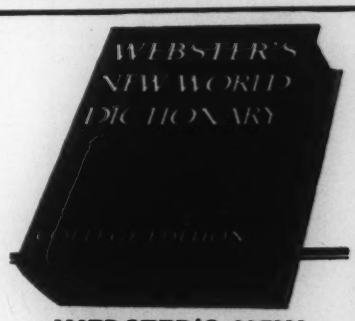

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NORTH CAROLINA — VIRGINIA CEA

The North Carolina-Virginia regional C.E.A. meeting was held on October 26 at Mary Washington College, Federicksburg, Virginia. The morning session, at which R. W. Whidden of Mary Washington College presided, consisted of a report on the place of literature in the freshman course based on a survey of regional institutions made by John Hamilton of Appalachian State Teachers College and Dora Jean Ashe of Lynchburg College. The feature of the morning program was an address by Thomas Clark Pollock of New York University on "Closed Circuit TV—Miracle or Menace?" This address was televised as a closed-circuit TV demonstration and was followed by a discussion period at which Dr. Pollock, in person as well as being seen on the television screen, answered questions concerning television as a means of instruction on the college level.

Members, as guests of Mary Washington College for luncheon, were greeted by Chancellor Grellet C. Simpson. A Bernard Shelley of North Carolina State College presided at the luncheon and introduced the speaker, Harry R. Warfel of the University of Florida. Dr. Warfel read from Walt Whitman's poetry and from Shakespeare's **Hamlet** to illustrate his subject, "Grammar not Vocabulary Makes Literature."

R. C. Simonini, Jr., of Longwood College, presided at the afternoon business session during which a constitution for the regional was adopted and plans were made to organize the association on a more permanent basis. The following officers were elected: president, Marvin B. Perry, Jr., of Washington and Lee University; vice-president, A. Bernard Shelley of North Carolina State College; secretary-treasurer for a three-year term, Edgar W. Hirshberg of East Carolina College. A Board of Advisors to the president was also elected as follows: Hoyt E. Bowen of Pfeiffer College for a three year term; William B. Guthrie of the University of Richmond, two-year term; Mary Nichols of Longwood College, one-year term; and R. C. Simonini, Jr., retiring president, one-year term.

Edgar Hirshberg urged membership in the National College English Association and outlined some of its services to the regional groups. Mary Nichols urged attendance at national C. E. A. meetings.

Marvin B. Perry, Jr. presided during the afternoon session at a panel discussion of "Utilizing More Efficiently Teaching Resources in English." The members of the panel, Mildred Davis of Longwood College, John C. Coleman of the University of Virginia, and Richard Van Fossen of Duke University, answered questions concerning both the teaching of college English and the most effective ways to secure well-qualified English staff members.

Mary Nichols
Secretary-treasurer

Fall Meeting of the South-Central CEA

The annual fall South-Central CEA breakfast meeting was held in the Student Center at Southern Methodist University, October 26, with the president, Frances Fletcher (Louisiana Polytechnic), presiding. Ninety-nine people were present. Willa Claire Cox, reporting for the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate of officers for 1958-'59, which was unanimously approved: A. A. Hill (University of Texas), president; L. M. McKneely (Northeast Louisiana State College) secretary; and Robert C. Snyder (Louisiana Polytechnic), interstate liaison officer.

According to a policy set last year, immediate past presidents serve on the Executive Committee. For next year these are Ernest E. Leisy (Southern Methodist), Karl E. Snyder (Texas Christian), Rudolph Fiehler (Louisiana Polytechnic), Patrick Hogan (Mississippi State College), and Miss Fletcher.

Mr. Hogan, in urging members to affiliate with the national organization, spoke briefly about the Madison CEA meetings, which he and other South-Central members (Doris Johnson and Ima H. Herron of Southern Methodist) attended. He noted our constituent membership in the Southern Humanities Conference and suggested our studying the matter of affiliating with the Council for Basic Education (Washington, D. C.).

The morning's program began with the reading of a paper, "From What I Have Tasted of Desire," by Mr. Robert C. Snyder (Louisiana Polytechnic) who trenchantly protested against the introductory college reading course expressive too often of the "tidbit school." Will we, with our departmental charlatanism, further the "new illiteracy" by our failure to provide modern "centers of excellence" in our freshman reading programs?

Professor A. A. Hill (University of Texas), making full use of illustrative sentences, read a paper entitled "Correspondence Between Punctuation Marks and Spoken Signals." Discussing the four pauses, or elongations, set up by linguists, Professor Hill noted that correspondences cannot be shown in neat rules, for one must consider differences in dialects, the misinterpretations of signals misheard, and other ambiguities.

Mr. L. M. McKneely (Northeast Louisiana State College) concluded the program.

Ima H. Herron (Southern Methodist)

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